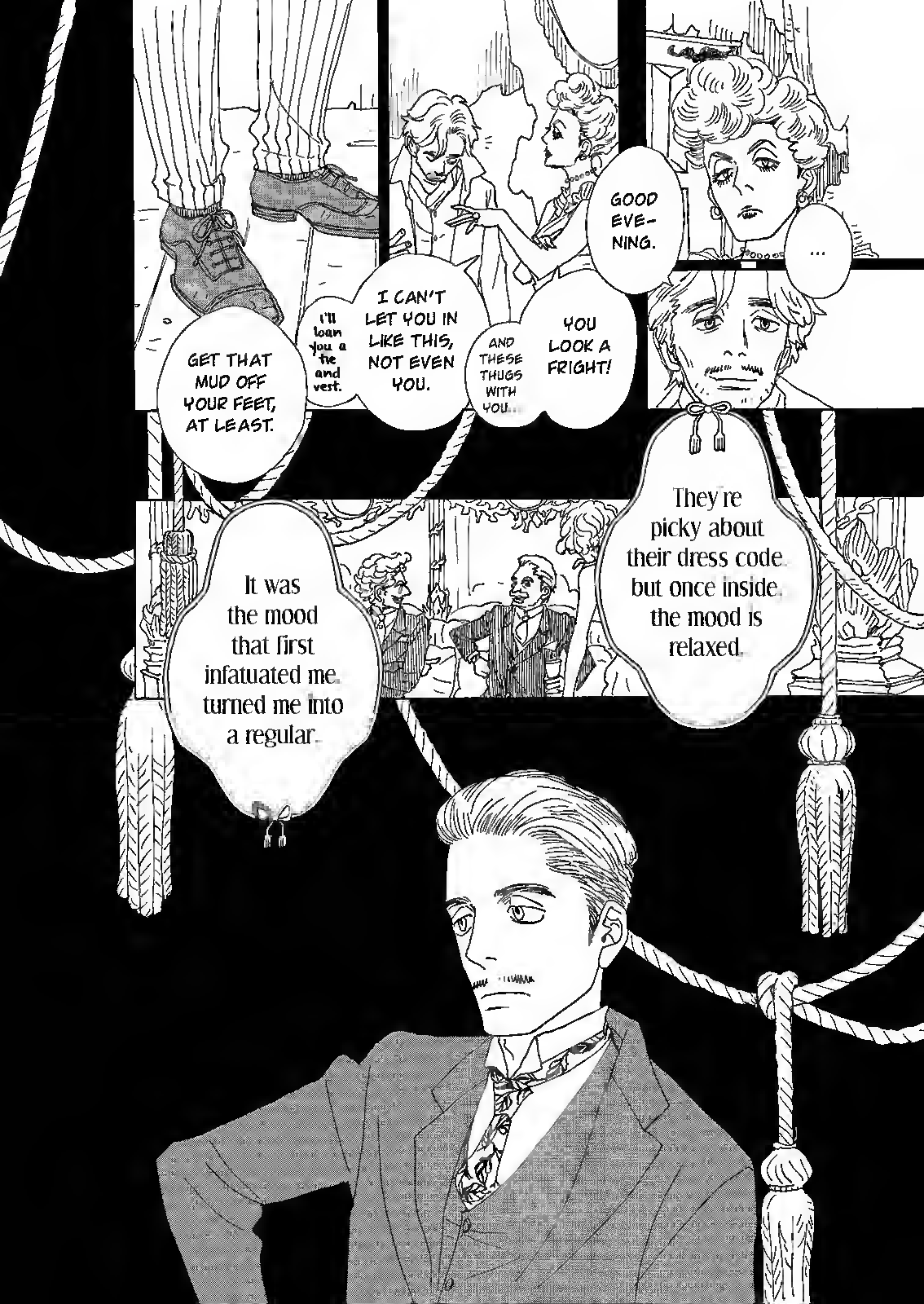
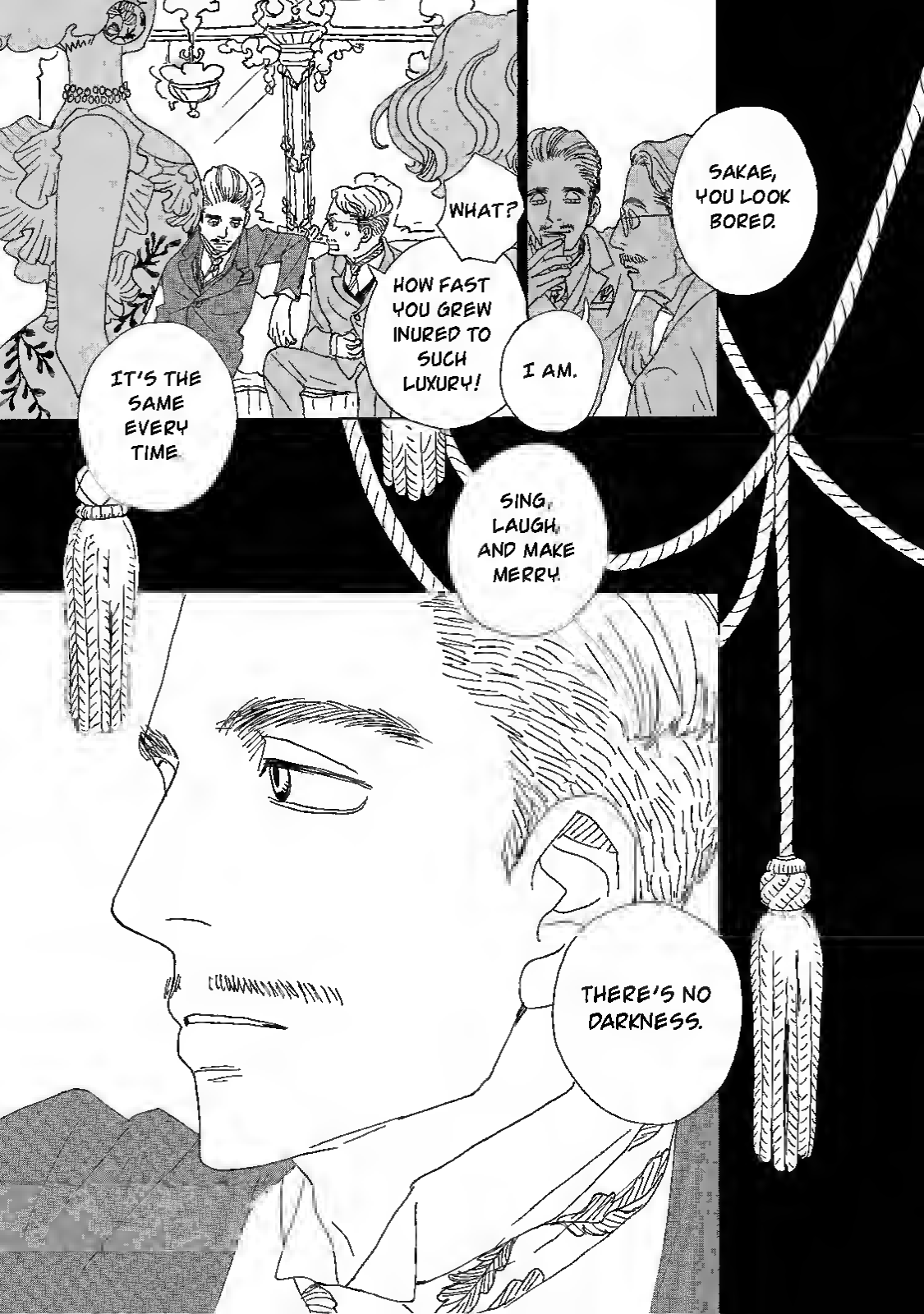
RIGHT...
I KNOW THIS ROAD.
HEY, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
YOU GUYS THIRSTY?
CHABANAIS IS JUST OVER THERE.
This was a very famous brothel, a Maison Close. Everyone in Paris knew it.
WANT A DRINK?
IT'S ON ME.
CHABANAIS

A palace of pleasure and desire
COME ON IN!
Hmm?
HEY!!
WAIT, BROTHER. IT'S COLD OUT.
HOW OFTEN CAN WE AFFORD A PLACE LIKE THAT?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT LEON. LET HIM WAIT.
HE KEPT YOU WAITING LONG ENOUGH.
Enter the Maison Close

Welcome


GOOD EVE-NING.
...
YOU LOOK A FRIGHT!
AND THESE THUGS WITH YOU...
I CAN'T LET YOU IN LIKE THIS, NOT EVEN YOU.
I'll loan you a tie and vest.
GET THAT MUD OFF YOUR FEET, AT LEAST.
They're picky about their dress code but once inside the mood is relaxed.
It was the mood that first infatuated me turned me into a regular.


SAKAE, YOU LOOK BORED.
I AM.
WHAT?
HOW FAST YOU GREW INURED TO SUCH LUXURY!
IT'S THE SAME EVERY TIME.
SING, LAUGH, AND MAKE MERRY.
THERE'S NO DARKNESS.

That was exactly the criticism directed at my own work.
SUGIURA-SHI'S WORK CONSISTS ALMOST ENTIRELY OF WHAT CAN ONLY BE TAKEN AS WOULD-BE ART CRAFTED BY A FRAUDULENT HACK.
IF ONE CAN PENETRATE HIS HABITUAL OVERUSE OF VULGAR ENIGMATIC DEVICES, ONE FINDS THE ESSENTIAL DARKNESS BENEATH HAS NOT BEEN DEPICTED AT ALL.
I SEE...
...
IT IS TEMPTING TO BLAME THIS ON A PAUCITY OF ARTISTIC DISPOSITION... SAKAE: EVER SINCE...
I've been trying to compensate for that truth.
Ever since...
BUT THE TRUTH IS, IT IS MERELY A BYPRODUCT OF HIS PATHETIC ROMANTICISM, BORROWING FORM ALONE FROM THAT WHICH THE AUTHOR ADMIRES
OR DECRY IT AS PROOF OF THE DANGERS OF THE RECENT TREND TOWARDS HEDONISTIC LITERATURE.

No darkness.

But in time I understood.
I have no darkness.
That was why I sought it out.

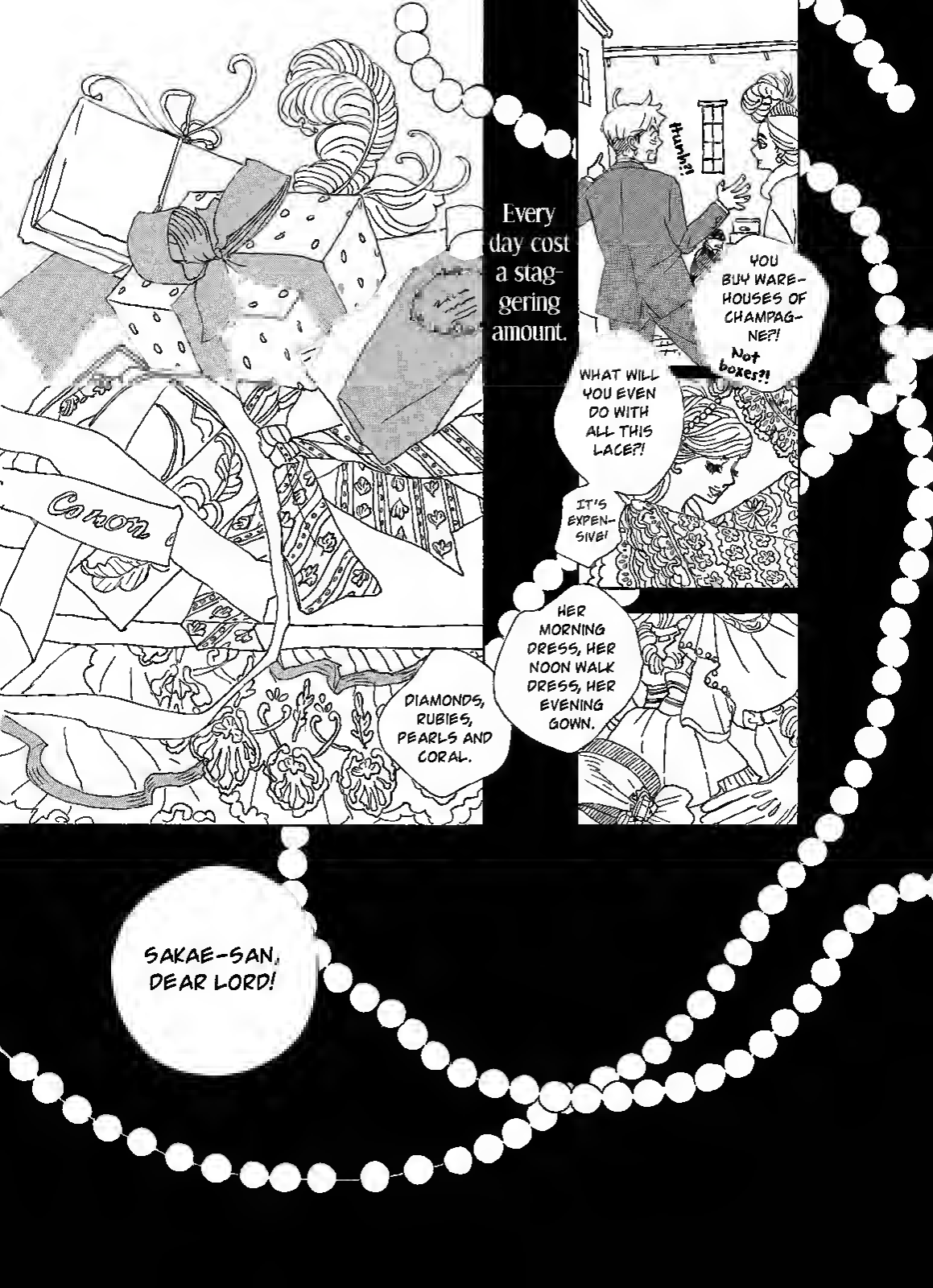
THAT WOMAN IS PURE HELL!
SHE'S BEAUTIFUL LIKE A FLOWER, SOFT LIKE INSECT WINGS...
HER VOICE LIKE THE HARPS OF HEAVEN, SWEET AND KIND...
THEN...
YOU...
LEARN...
HER NIGHTMARISH TRUE NATURE! SHE IS THE EMBODIMENT OF GREED, LEECHING EVERY COIN SHE CAN FROM A MAN.
...
AND MEN FALL INTO HER TRAP OF THEIR OWN VOLITION.
BEFORE YOU KNOW IT, SHE'S TAKEN THE SHIRT OFF YOUR BACK AND ORDERED YOU TO SELL IT FOR HER.
WANNA MEET HER?

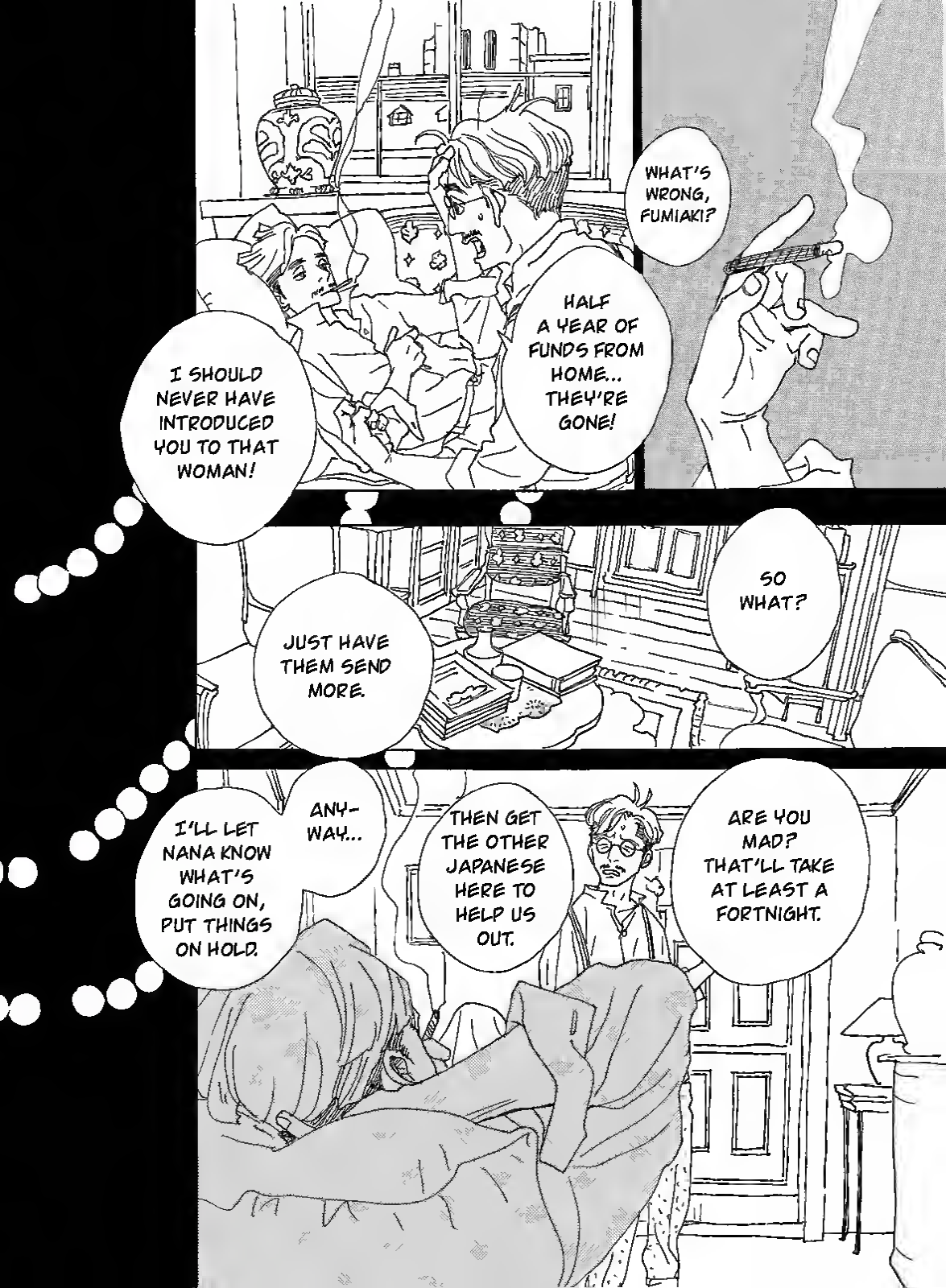
That...
was
Nana.

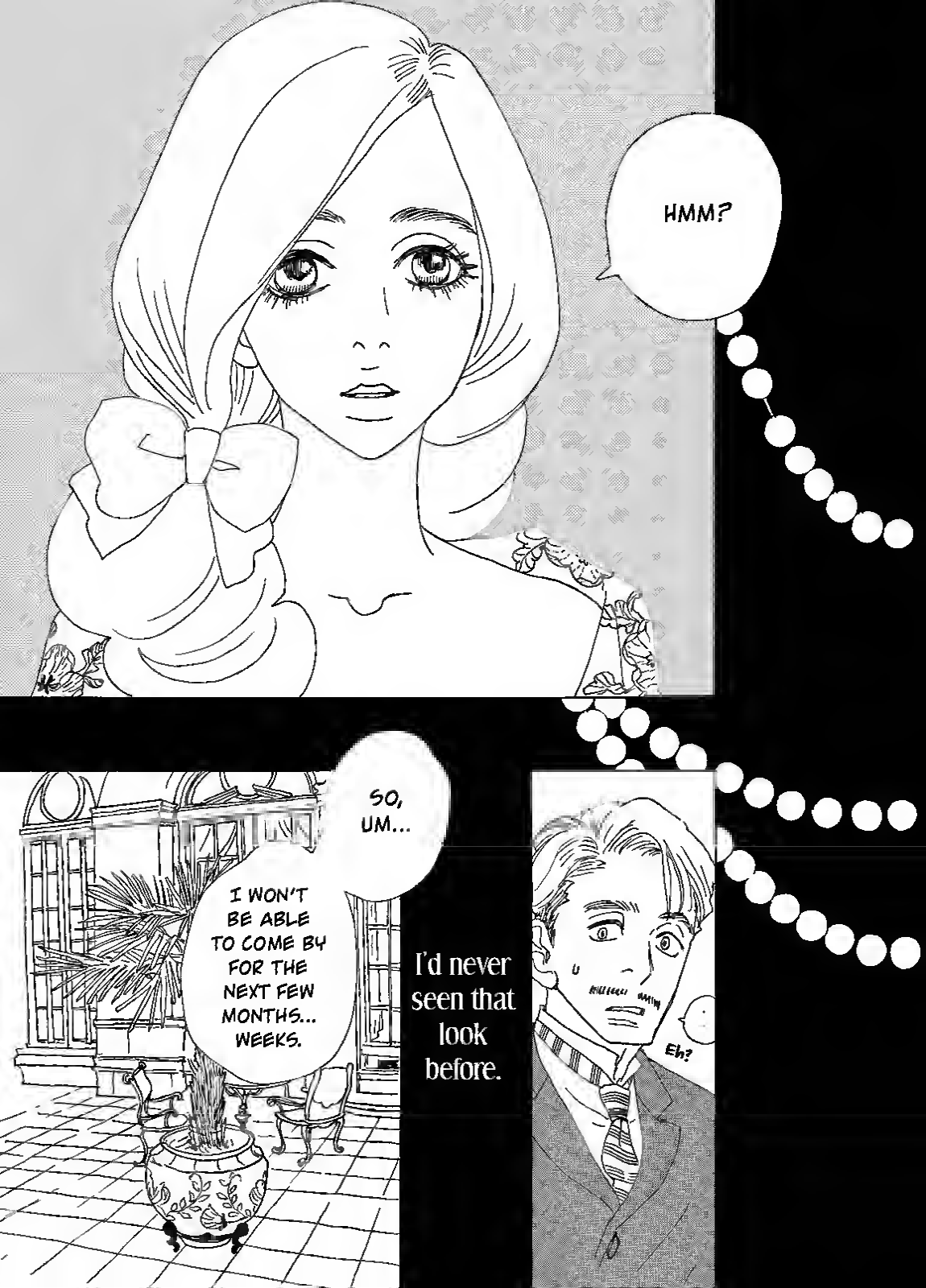
YOU SMELL...
WOW...
Women would be repulsed by me, or pretend I wasn't there.
Honestly, I was often the victim of racism.
But when I met Nana, she said...

...LIKE A WILLOW TREE.
Ba-dum
The days that followed were like a dream come true.
That night, I wrote her words in my notebook.

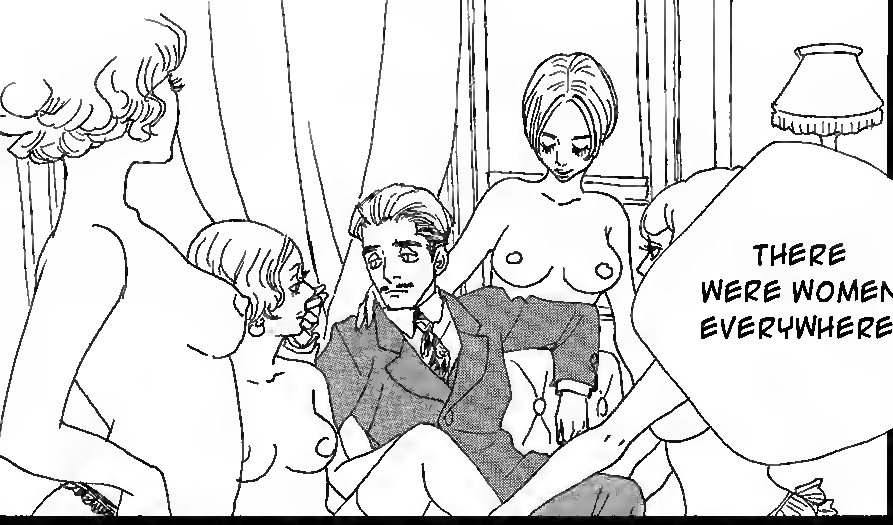
SAKAE! TODAY WE GO TO THE OPERA.
SAKAE!
Before I knew it, I was dancing on the palm of her hand.


Every day cost a staggering amount.
Hunh?!
YOU BUY WAREHOUSES OF CHAMPAGNE?!
Not boxes?!
WHAT WILL YOU EVEN DO WITH ALL THIS LACE?!
IT'S EXPENSIVE!
HER MORNING DRESS, HER NOON WALK DRESS, HER EVENING GOWN.
DIAMONDS, RUBIES, PEARLS AND CORAL.
SAKAE-SAN, DEAR LORD!

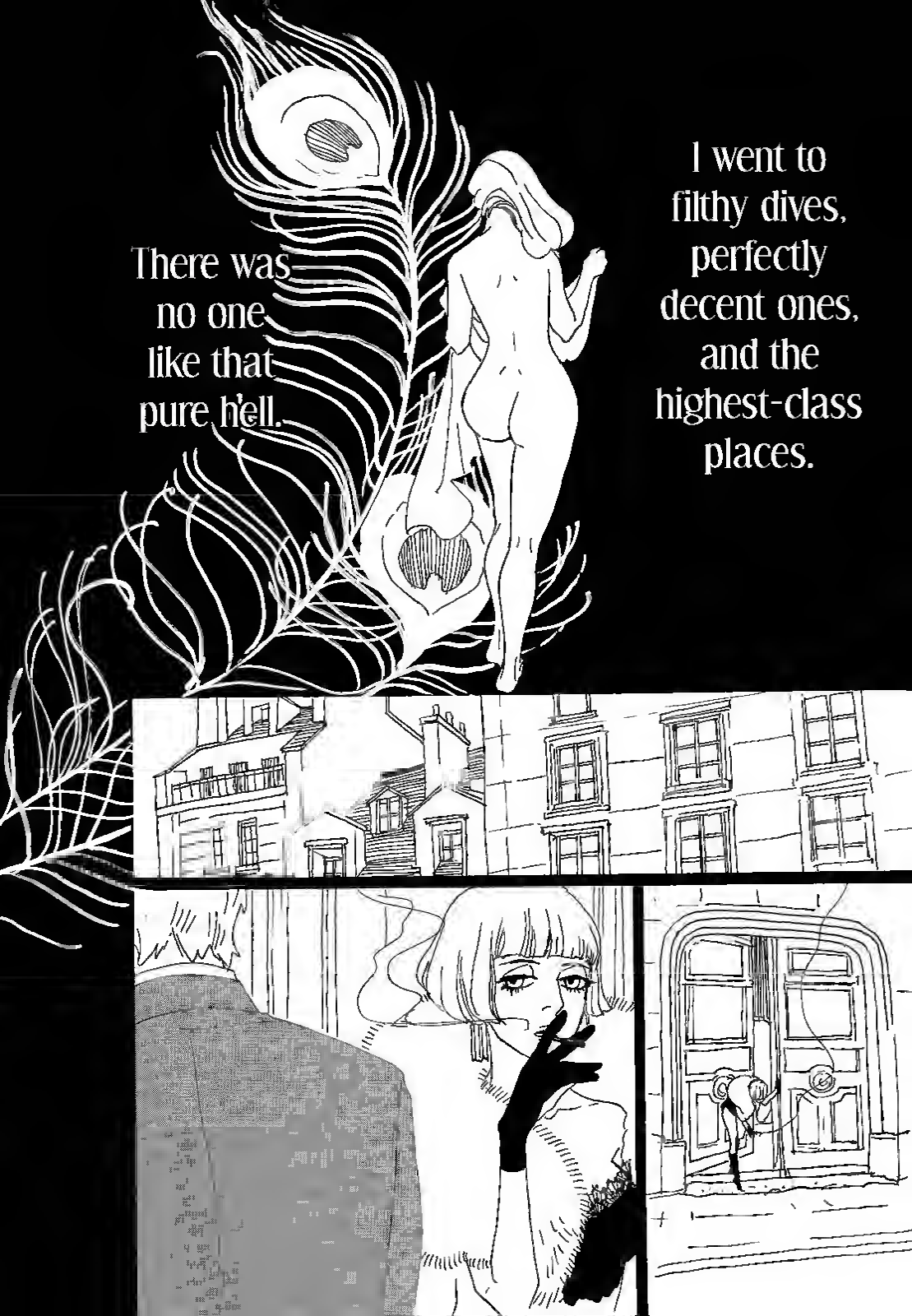

WHAT'S WRONG, FUMIAKI?
HALF A YEAR OF FUNDS FROM HOME... THEY'RE GONE!
I SHOULD NEVER HAVE INTRODUCED YOU TO THAT WOMAN!
SO WHAT?
JUST HAVE THEM SEND MORE.
ARE YOU MAD? THAT'LL TAKE AT LEAST A FORTNIGHT.
THEN GET THE OTHER JAPANESE HERE TO HELP US OUT.
ANY-WAY...
I'LL LET NANA KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON, PUT THINGS ON HOLD.


HMM?
SO, UM...
I WON'T BE ABLE TO COME BY FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS... WEEKS.
I'd never seen that look before.
Eh?

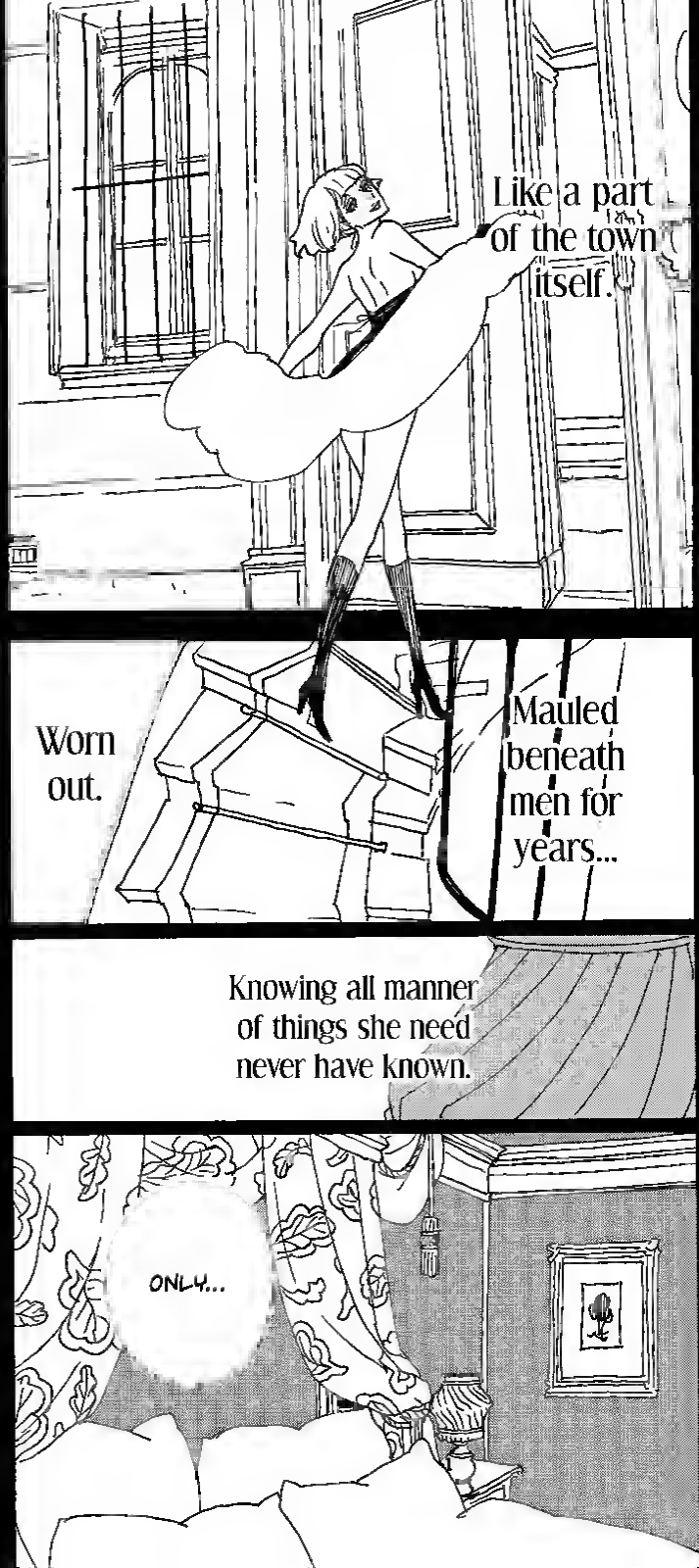
I had forgotten.
BE THE SAKAE I LOVE AGAIN SOON, PLEASE.
WELL...
WHAT A SHAME.
She was the most evil woman alive.
SHE WON'T SEE ME AT ALL? JUST BECAUSE I'M TEMPORARILY OUT OF FUNDS?
HOW RUDE! AFTER ALL I SPENT ON HER!
DAMN IT.


THERE WERE WOMEN EVERYWHERE.

I searched in vain.


There was no one like that pure h'ell.
I went to filthy dives, perfectly decent ones, and the highest-class places.

LOOKING FOR SOMEONE?
Her voice was husky.
YOU WON'T FIND HER ANYWHERE.
ONLY SHE WILL DO.
RIGHT?
...
I WAS BUT I COULDN'T FIND HER.


Like a part of the town itself.
Worn out.
Mauled beneath men for years...
Knowing all manner of things she need never have known.
ONLY...

Wreathed in a haze of sadness and glamour...

"THERE'S A CERTAIN TYPE OF GIRL WHO BECOMES A WHORE."
"HER HOME IS A MESS."
"SHE CRAVES NEW STIMULI ABOVE ALL."

AH HA HA
RIGHT, COLETTE...
I WAS SO CRUEL TO YOU.
I REACTED EMOTIONALLY, SAID THAT WHICH I NORMALLY WOULD LEAVE UNSAID.
I DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO STRIKE SO NEAR MY HEART.

Why did I say that to you?

"That woman is pure hell!"

...is a woman who mirrors your true self.

Perhaps what that really describes...